## 18 \$MILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMEE

the newspaper trade of Paris was carried on chiefly in and about the Rue de la Victoire.

Directly the Zolas were installed in their new abode the young wife had to make preparations for her expected babe. In this matter she was assisted by her mother, Madame

Aubert, a bright and sturdy woman, who had sprung from that peasantry which is the backbone of France. And soon afterwards, at eleven o'clock on the night of Wednesday,

April 2, on a camp-bedstead, placed near the hedroom window already mentioned, there was born a child, who to the great delight of parents and grandparents was found to be a boy. Two days later the birth was registered at the Municipal Offices of the district, and the babe then received the names of Jlmile Edouard Charles Antoine.1

Born on the spot where Moli&re and La Jontaine had slumbered, that "boy was destined like them to rise literary celebrity. The laugh which Moli&re cast over ness, the light archness of La Fontaine, were his. never •was with deep earnestness that he stripped **Tartuffe** of his last shred of clothing, that he bared social everv to the gaze of a shrinking world. And the of moral his disclosures was not pointed in any vein of halfindulgent

sarcasm, but writ large, in letters of fire, which burnt and

branded. Moreover, a supreme destiny was reserved for him: Ms voice became at one moment that of the conscience of mankind.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of his birth the Yictorian age was dawning in England. The Queen had lately married. Most of Tennyson's work was still undone, and so was Buskin's.

 $<sup>^{1}</sup>$  See post, Appendix A. Declaration of the birth of imile Zola,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Anatole France, October 5,1902.